

The Western United States is rich in coal, oil, and natural gas. We need to make it easier, not harder, to develop those resources. The development of the abundant and affordable energy that we are blessed with as a nation is crucial.

The effort by this administration to quell the development of these resources is unacceptable. I cannot support them and, that being the case, I am not able to support the nomination of Ms. McCarthy.

WEAPONS SALES

Mr. LEVIN Mr. President, we recently marked 1 year since the tragic shooting in Aurora, CO. One year since our nation witnessed innocent men, women, and children streaming out of a movie theater, bloodied and in shock. One year since 12 people were murdered and 58 injured at the hands of an armed and mentally deranged individual who was able to channel his illness in the most dangerous way: through the barrel of an AR-15 military-style assault weapon.

Such weapons, according to the Congressional Research Service, were designed in the aftermath of the Second World War to give soldiers a weapon suited for the modern battlefield. They are designed to kill as many people as possible, as quickly as possible. And in Aurora, the AR-15 did just that.

Since that night, all around our country, the gun violence has continued. But still, we in Congress have done nothing to stem these gun tragedies. Today, just like this day 1 year ago, a convicted felon, a domestic abuser, or a dangerously mentally ill individual can go to a private seller and legally purchase a deadly military-style weapon just as easily as they can purchase a gallon of milk, no background check required.

Take, for example, a recent undercover investigation conducted by a team of National Geographic journalists who wanted to see just how easy it is for criminals to obtain guns. What the team found was deeply unnerving. Speaking to investigative journalist Mariana van Zeller, private investigator and former police officer Jesse Torrez put it bluntly: "We should be able to get you involved in a weapons transaction within 30 minutes . . . and that's travel time, too."

He was right. The investigators decided to attempt to purchase an AK-47, a military-style assault weapon. On the weapon-selling website [*www.armslist.com*], a posting selling a similar firearm for \$830 proudly describes it, among other things, as "the standard issue firearm in the Yugoslav People's Army in 1970." But compared to the investigation's findings, that weapon would have been overpriced. In just a few minutes, the National Geographic investigators found an online posting selling an AK-47 for \$750 in cash. They agreed to meet the seller in a fast food parking lot. Under Federal law, back-

ground checks are not required for "private" gun sales, so the transaction was completed quickly and legally. The vendor even offered to add "several" AR-15 assault rifles to the sale as a sort of impulse buy, like candy in a convenience store.

Upping the ante, the investigators then searched for a .50-caliber sniper rifle, a weapon the team described as "so powerful that the U.S. military uses it to penetrate concrete and steel." Again, within minutes, they found an internet seller offering a .50-caliber rifle from a nearby garage. Without any form of background check, the National Geographic team purchased the weapon, along with 11 boxes of ammunition containing 12 rounds apiece. In the chilling words of the private seller, "You have a lot of firepower to start your own war."

Our society should not be a war zone. The purchasers in this case were undercover investigators, but next time, they might not be. They could be felons, domestic abusers, or a mentally deranged individual planning to use the weapon for harm.

We owe it to the survivors and the victims of Aurora to keep weapons designed for war off our streets. We owe it to the American people to listen to the 90 percent of them who support universal background checks on all gun sales. We owe it to our families, our neighbors, and our children to stop deadly weapons from getting into the wrong hands. We should take up and pass legislation such as the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013, which would stop the flood of military-style weapons into our neighborhoods. We should extend background checks to all gun sales by passing the Safe Communities, Safe Schools Act of 2013. We should, in short, turn common sense into law. But that will only happen if Congress acts.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT S. MUELLER

Ms. MIKULSKI Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Robert S. Mueller, III, and to thank him for his 12 years of service as the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI.

Director Mueller had just settled into his office just a week before the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. These attacks on the Nation affected us all, including in my home State of Maryland. In the terrible aftermath of the events of that day, we grieved together. On 9/11, we were caught unprepared, searching for answers and scrambling to find a way to prevent future attacks.

After 9/11, the FBI was charged with a heavy responsibility: disrupt terrorist plots before they happen by identifying, tracking, and dismantling terrorists on U.S. soil. During his term, Director Mueller has provided steadfast leadership, guiding the FBI as it transformed from a traditional domestic law enforcement agency into a global counterterrorism and crime-fighting force.

His guidance has helped keep Americans safe from terrorist attacks here at home and abroad. But such leadership is nothing new to Director Mueller. Before he led the FBI, he served our Nation as a decorated marine in Vietnam, and as a Federal prosecutor who tackled cases ranging from the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 to the prosecution of Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega.

Director Mueller has shown unwavering commitment to the FBI and its mission. He is the only Director to serve a full 10-year term, and then serve another 2 years. From day one, he has fought to make sure the hard-working men and women at the FBI have the tools they need to carry out their extraordinary responsibilities. As chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that funds the FBI and as a member of the Intelligence Committee, I am proud to call Director Mueller my steadfast partner in that fight. Together, we have worked to provide the FBI with the capabilities to stop terrorists before they attack us here at home, go after schemers and scammers who prey on hard-working American families, prevent cyber terrorists from devastating our technology infrastructure, and catch sexual predators who seek to harm our children.

Lastly, Director Mueller has strong integrity. He speaks truth to power, even when the truth is unpopular or inconvenient. He is a straight talker—when he tells me that the FBI needs more tools to carry out its national security and crime-fighting duties, I find a way to help him get those tools because I trust his judgment, and I trust his leadership. He answered the call to service when President Bush asked him to serve as FBI Director in 2001. And he answered the call of President Obama when asked to serve 2 more years.

We live in extraordinarily critical times, and face threats from both within and outside our Nation. But over the past 12 years we knew that having Director Mueller at the FBI meant that one of the tested "nighthawks" was guarding our Nation's national security. I speak for all Americans when I say that we have been privileged to have such a committed and dedicated public servant leading the FBI. I will miss my steadfast partner and friend and, above all, wish to send him a heartfelt thank you.

LEWISTON FIREFIGHTERS

Ms. COLLINS Mr. President, in one terrifying week this spring, Lewiston, ME, my State's second largest city, was attacked by arsonists who destroyed nine buildings and left hundreds of people homeless. I rise today in tribute to the firefighters of Lewiston who answered those cruel attacks with skill and courage and who saved their city with no loss of life or serious injury.

We have always had a deep respect and admiration for our firefighters and